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SEVEN NEW OR NOTEWORTHY BIRDS FROM EAST-CENTRAL
CALIFORNIA

By JOSEPH GRINNELL

(Contribution from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology of the University of California)

THE FIELD WORK carried on by the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology during 1917, in that portion of California comprising Mono and Inyo counties, brought to light some new facts in regard to the general distribution and geographic variation of western birds. The more prominent of these discoveries are set forth in the present paper, whereby seven new names are added to the list of the birds known to belong to California.

***Glaucidium gnoma pinicola* Nelson**

Rocky Mountain Pigmy Owl

An adult female of this owl (no. 27887, Mus. Vert. Zool.) was taken by the writer September 30, 1917, at 6200 feet altitude some three miles east of Jackass Spring, in the northern section of the Panamint Mountains, Inyo County. The place of capture was in the pinyon belt, and here the species must have been common, for the characteristic notes were heard almost nightly during the period from September 30 to October 7.

The specimen shows nearly complete fresh plumage. As compared with examples of *Glaucidium gnoma californicum*, in the same condition, from the Sierra Nevada, it is of slightly greater size, slatier (hair brown) tone of coloration on the dorsal surface, and has the streaking beneath blacker. Chord of wing, 101.1 mm.; tail (measured by the Ridgway method), 72.1; culmen from cere, 12.0. The features given accord almost exactly with the characterization of *pinicola* furnished by Ridgway (Birds N. and Mid. Amer., pt. vi, 1914, p. 789). Furthermore, Mr. E. W. Nelson, the original describer of *pinicola*, who was recently shown the skin offhand without his previous knowledge of its locality, instantly pronounced it to belong to *pinicola*.

***Dryobates villosus leucothorectis* Oberholser**

White-breasted Woodpecker

This proved to be the representative race of the Hairy Woodpecker in the White and Panamint mountains, in Mono and Inyo counties. As compared with *Dryobates villosus hyloscopus*, of the southern Sierras and southern California generally, the Inyo birds are notably whiter beneath and smaller billed. As compared with *D. v. orius* of northeastern California the Inyo birds are decidedly smaller throughout. The following table serves to show the localities and measurements of the specimens of *D. v. leucothorectis* taken.

No.	Sex	Locality	Collector	Date	Wing	Tail	Exposed culmen
27892	♀	Hanaupah Canyon, 8000 ft., Panamint Mts.	J. Dixon	June 2, 1917	124.6	83.2	26.1
27893	♂	Hanaupah Canyon, 8000 ft., Panamint Mts.	J. Dixon	June 2, 1917	123.8	70.5 ¹	28.2
27894	♂	3 mi. east Jackass Spr., 6200 ft., Panamint Mts.	J. Grinnell	Sept. 30, 1917	128.3	82.6	28.0
27895	♂	Silver Canyon, 7000 ft., White Mts.	H. G. White	July 19, 1917	127.2	62.0 ¹	28.4
27896	♀	McAfee Cr., 9000 ft., jv. White Mts.	A. C. Shelton	Aug. 9, 1917	116.5	76.5	25.0

¹Worn off at end.

It may be noted here that Oberholser in his revision of the Hairy Woodpeckers (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., vol. 40, 1911, p. 611) considered birds from the Piute Mountains, Kern County, as inclining somewhat towards *leucothorectis*. He listed them under *hyloscopus*, however, as also specimens from the White Mountains, the latter without comment.

Selasphorus platycercus (Swainson)
Broad-tailed Hummingbird

It is at last possible to announce an absolutely conclusive instance of the occurrence of this bird in California. On August 13, 1917, Mr. H. G. White, field assistant for this Museum, was so fortunate as to secure an adult female Broad-tailed Hummingbird (no. 27941, Mus. Vert. Zool.), together with its nest (no. 1724) and two half-grown young (nos. 28877, 28878, in alcohol), in the White Mountains, Inyo County. This was at about 9000 feet altitude, two miles northwest of the Roberts Ranch, on the east flank of the White Mountains in the upper part of Wyman Creek canyon. The nest was situated three feet above the ground in a *symporicarpos* bush growing on the canyon wall at the edge of a black rock slide and about twenty yards from the bed of the canyon. This was in the *cercocarpus* belt near the upper edge of the pinyon belt; life-zone, low Canadian or Transition.

The present record quite satisfactorily substantiates that by Swarth (CONDOR, xviii, 1916, p. 130) of a bird seen by him (but not taken), in Mazourka Canyon, Inyo Mountains, May 24, 1912. The present announcement, however, does not mean the re-establishment of any of the three old records of the species for California, these having been disposed of as faulty in various ways (see Grinnell, Pac. Coast Avif. no. 11, 1915, pp. 184-185). The indications are that this Rocky Mountain species of hummingbird occurs regularly as a summer visitant to the high mountains along the eastern border of California, east of Owens Valley.

Calcarius ornatus (Townsend)
Chestnut-collared Longspur

An immature female of this species, new to California, was taken by the writer at the "Cow Camp" on Lee Flat, 5200 feet altitude, fifteen miles due north of Darwin, Inyo County, September 28, 1917. This bird (no. 28260, Mus. Vert. Zool.) is in complete first-winter plumage. It was alone on the ground near the seepage from a cement water-trough, and was apprehended among the small birds visiting the oasis by reason of its peculiar call-note.

Pipilo maculatus montanus Swarth
Mountain Towhee

The series of spotted towhees (nos. 28445-28456, Mus. Vert. Zool.) obtained in the Panamint Mountains, Inyo County, is found to properly come under the name *montanus*. As compared with *P. m. curtatus* of the Mono Lake country and northern Nevada, the Panamint birds show decisively greater length of tail and longer hind claws. As compared with *P. m. falcinellus* from the west slope of the central Sierra Nevada, the Panamint birds show longer tail and much greater extent of white markings.

Two examples in unworn fall plumage, taken by Joseph Dixon and the writer three miles east of Jackass Spring, in the northern portion of the Panamint Mountains, September 30 and October 3, respectively, 1917, show measurements as follows. No. 28455, male immature (that is, in full first-winter plumage):

wing, 90.3 mm.; tail, 108.2; culmen, 12.8; tarsus, 27.5; hind toe and claw, 19.2; length of white spot on inner web of outer rectrix, 31.5. No. 28456, female adult: wing, 84.4 mm.; tail, 100.0; culmen, 13.0; tarsus, 28.0; hind toe and claw, 20.7; length of white spot on inner web of outer rectrix, 29.5. The above measurements will be best understood when compared with the tables in Swarth's revision of the California spotted towhees (*CONDOR*, xv, 1913, p. 175).

In establishing this identification I have had the advantage of the experience of Mr. Harry S. Swarth with this group. He has gone over the material here reported upon and has concurred in the above conclusions.

Sitta carolinensis tenuissima, new subspecies

Inyo Slender-billed Nuthatch

Type.—Male adult, no. 28716, Mus. Vert. Zool.; Hanaupah Canyon, 8700 feet altitude, Panamint Mountains, Inyo County, California; June 1, 1917; collected by J. Dixon; orig. no. 6114.

Diagnostic characters.—Similar to *Sitta carolinensis aculeata* from west-central California, but bill much longer and slenderer (see fig. 11), size larger, back of a darker tone of gray, and flanks paler; similar to *S. c. nelsoni* from southern Arizona, but bill much slenderer (see fig. 11), and sides, and lower surface generally, whiter.

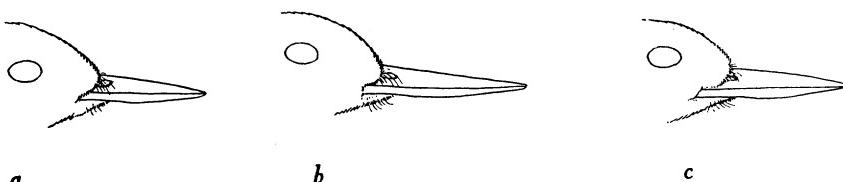


Fig. 11. BILLS OF THREE WESTERN SUBSPECIES OF WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*); ALL NATURAL SIZE.

- a. *S. c. aculeata*, ♂ AD.; NO. 5344, MUS. VERT. ZOOL.; MT. DIABLO, CONTRA COSTA Co., CALIF.; APRIL 18, 1896.
- b. *S. c. tenuissima*, ♂ AD.; NO. 28716, MUS. VERT. ZOOL.; PANAMINT MTS., INYO Co., CALIF.; JUNE 1, 1917.
- c. *S. c. nelsoni*, ♂ AD.; NO. 27781, MUS. VERT. ZOOL.; SIERRA ANCHA, GILA Co., ARIZ.; JUNE 24, 1917.

Remarks.—A series of 21 specimens of this new nuthatch (nos. 28716-28736, Mus. Vert. Zool.) from the Panamint and White mountains includes eleven young and ten adults. The latter are listed in the accompanying table of measurements. In some respects this race is intermediate between the Rocky Mountain form and that of the Pacific coast region, but in the extreme slenderness of bill differs from either. Judging from the table of measurements given by Ridgway (*Birds N. and Mid. Amer.*, pt. III, 1904, p. 445) the range of *S. c. tenuissima* is likely to be found to extend north along the western rim of the Great Basin at least to Fort Klamath, Oregon.

In view of Ridgway's synopsis and descriptions of the previously known forms of *Sitta carolinensis* (*loc. cit.*, pp. 440-450), it seems unnecessary to go into further comparisons here.

MEASUREMENTS (IN MILLIMETERS) OF TEN ADULT SPECIMENS OF *SITTA CAROLINENSIS TENUISSIMA*, FROM THE INYO REGION OF CALIFORNIA

Mus. No.	Sex	Locality	Date (1917)	Wing	Tail	Exposed culmen	Depth of bill at base
28716	♂	Hanaupah Canyon, 8700 ft., Panamint Mts.	June 1	91.3	52.1	21.7	4.0
28717	♂	Head of Silver Canyon, 9800 ft., White Mts.	July 13	92.4	50.5	20.4	3.9
28718	♂	Silver Canyon, 7000 ft., White Mts.	July 18	89.5	49.9	20.0	3.8
28721	♂	Big Prospector Mead., 10600 ft., White Mts.	July 25	87.9	44.8	20.2	3.7
28723	♂	Big Prospector Mead., 10360 ft., White Mts.	July 26	86.8	45.7	20.0	4.0
28728	♂	Poison Creek, 9800 ft., White Mts.	Aug. 3	89.4	52.3	21.0	3.7
28736	♂	3 mi. E. Jackass Spr., 6200 ft., Panamint Mts.	Sept. 30	89.3	47.8	20.0	3.8
28719	♀	Silver Canyon, 7000 ft., White Mts.	July 18	86.0	45.0	20.0	3.8
28722	♀	Big Prospector Mead., 10500 ft., White Mts.	July 25	87.1	44.0	20.3	3.8
28727	♀	Big Prospector Mead., 10300 ft., White Mts.	July 30	85.0	43.2	21.0	4.0

Hylocichla guttata polionota, new subspecies

White Mountains Hermit Thrush

Type.—Male immature (passing from juvenal to first annual plumage, the latter predominating); no. 28848, Mus. Vert. Zool.; Wyman Creek at 8000 feet altitude, east slope of White Mountains, in Inyo County, California; August 18, 1917; collected by H. G. White; orig. no. 1305.

Diagnostic characters (among the races of *Hylocichla guttata*, for general definitions of which see Ridgway, Birds N. and Mid. Amer., pt. iv, 1907, pp. 35-51).—Size large, between that of *H. g. sequoiensis* of the Sierra Nevada and of *H. g. auduboni* of the Rocky Mountains, nearest the former. Color of top of head and dorsum different from that in either of these races and, in fact, from that in any previously known race of Hermit Thrush. The tone of this coloration is the “olive-brown” of Ridgway (Color Standards and Color Nomenclature, 1912, pl. 40), and is close to that of the corresponding areas in the Olive-backed Thrush (*Hylocichla ustulata swainsoni*); it is if anything even more slaty.

Measurements.—Average of 12 males, all from the White Mountains: Wing, 98.6; tail, 73.8; exposed culmen, 12.7; tarsus, 29.8. For extremes, see accompanying table. The specimens measured are all but two full-grown juvenals. As regards wing and tail the dimensions of these young birds are, of course, perfectly valid; for there is no molt in the spring and the rectrices and remiges of the same aged birds the next summer (then “adult”) would be the same feathers, only more or less badly abraded. The measurements of culmen and tarsus are, however, less in these juvenals than in older (adult) birds, and this must be taken into account in comparisons with summer adults.

Range.—In summer, the Canadian and Hudsonian zones on the White Mountains, in Mono and Inyo counties, California. Places of capture of our 14 specimens were as follows: Cottonwood Creek at 9000-9200 feet, 7; Poison Creek at 9500-9900 feet, 3; Wyman Creek at 8000 feet, 4.

Remarks.—The race *sequoiensis*, of the Sierra Nevada just across Owens Valley to the west and in plain sight from the White Mountains, is ordinarily referred to as a pale-colored or even grayish-colored Hermit Thrush; but compared with *polionota*, the contrast in dorsal view is as of brown with slate-gray. The resemblance of *polionota* to the Olive-backed Thrush is striking.

The juvenal plumage of *polionota* is as distinctive in slaty tone of coloration as is the first annual. The two breeding “adults” in the series are in such worn

condition that the plumage has lost its color values. A few fresh new feathers, however, show among the primary wing coverts and on the alula; and so far as these go they indicate a coloration of adult annual plumage just like that of the first annual.

In an examination of hundreds of specimens of Hermit Thrushes from throughout the United States elsewhere than from the White Mountains, the writer has been unable to find one referable to the race *polionota*. It would seem that this subspecies, like some other migratory birds of the high mountains of the southwest, goes south in the fall to, and back again in the spring from, some far southern winter home without touching the lowlands within hundreds of miles of its restricted summer habitat.

The entire series of fourteen White Mountains Hermit Thrushes was secured through the energetic efforts of Mr. Halsted G. White, field assistant during the summer of 1917.

LIST AND MEASUREMENTS (IN MILLIMETERS) OF SPECIMENS OF *HYLOCICHLA GUTTATA POLIONOTA* COLLECTED IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS, MONO AND INYO COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA, IN 1917

No.	Sex	Date	Wing	Tail	Exposed culmen	Tarsus
28838	♂ jv.	July 31	96.6	71.2	12.9	28.8
28840	♂ jv.	July 31	99.5	73.0	12.2	29.1
28842	♂ jv.	Aug. 1	95.3	72.0	11.7	29.8
28843	♂ jv.	Aug. 1	101.6	76.8	30.1
28844	♂ ad. ¹	Aug. 3	97.5	73.0	14.3	31.2
28845	♂ ad. ¹	Aug. 3	99.2	77.3	13.3	28.8
28846	♂ jv.	Aug. 3	98.6	74.6	13.1	30.5
28847	♂ jv.	Aug. 3	101.3	77.3	12.9	30.7
28848	♂ im. ²	Aug. 18	96.9	73.0	12.4	29.7
28849	♂ im.	Aug. 18	97.5	69.7	12.1	28.8
28850	♂ im.	Aug. 18	98.2	72.8	12.4	30.4
28851	♂ im.	Aug. 18	101.1	74.7	12.1	30.3
28839	♀ jv.	July 31	92.6	67.0	28.9
28841	♀ jv.	Aug. 1	96.5	71.5	11.7	29.7

¹Badly worn.

²Type.

Berkeley, California, December 27, 1917.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Observations in a Swallow Colony.—The sea-wall a few miles from Oceanside in San Diego County rises abruptly from a very narrow beach and varies in height from twenty-five to one hundred feet. The materials forming this bluff are in horizontal layers, of clay, cobble-stone, sandstone, and shells, interspersed in a few places with solid masses of very hard rock.

In one of the sandstone strata a colony of Bank Swallows (*Riparia riparia*) have established their "cliff dwellings". Rising sharply from the beach, this layer of compact sand is nowhere over fifteen feet in thickness, while topping it is a stratum of cobble-stone and clay. That this cliff has been the home of many generations of swallows is very certain, as there are hundreds of abandoned tunnels and nests. Each year as the face of the wall is eroded and crumbles away the tiny tunnels are excavated a few inches deeper, and the new nest built at the very end.

No tunnels were found to exceed three feet in depth while the most of those examined were just the length of one's arm. In nearly every case it was an old tunnel that was being used, and as many as four or five old nests could be found buried along the passage. Building material used was a fine dark brown, grassy sea-weed, gathered from